1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941
(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

He cut a stick about nine inches long and began to whittle on it. He sharpened it at both ends. Suspecting that they were caught, the couple stole off and they lay together again, but the girl didn't see the stick that the boy had made. When they lay down, the boy put the stick at her belly, and when he pushed down, the stick went through her. Because it was sharpened at both ends, it went through him too, and they both died.

The people missed them, searched for them, and found them dead. In this case the parents were good and not witches, and that is why the boy killed his sister and himself.

In these days the charge of witchcraft is still made in cases of incest but not with as much effectiveness as formerly:

R. married C.'s daughter. C. and this boy's father were full brothers. C. didn't like it. He went to the boy. He told him, "Your father was my full brother. Why do you want to marry my daughter? People will call you a witch." He went to the agent about it, but he finally gave in. That's why there is so much trouble here now, they say. It's because things like this go on. The young people now are like dogs, like billy goats.

By the equation of incest with witchcraft, the gravest crime in the religious sphere and the most abhorrent act in the social realm have been combined. The charge of witchcraft acts as the dragnet which combs the society for the flagrant aberrant.[15]

Punishment of witches.—From the attitude toward those judged guilty of incest, the stern treatment of witches may be anticipated:

Sometimes personal revenge is taken on the witch. Every once in a while a witch is killed by the one he has been working against or by a dead man's relatives who find him out. Often they are shot. No one knows for sure who does it. .... The last case I know of happened twenty years ago. A man and his wife were shot as they came on horseback out of the canyon from the feast grounds where they had been working witchcraft.

[15] The data presented indicate the strong reactions of the majority of informants to incest and their equation of it with witchcraft. Some informants took a milder stand, however. Said one: "For incest between distant relatives, the punishment would not be so severe. A person might be whipped until he couldn't stand, but that's all. There is talk and disapproval, but after the pair are punished, the thing is forgiven and forgotten." Said another: "Not so much is thought about it if they are very distant relatives. They are whipped and insulted. This would not spoil their chance of marriage later on. A person who is pretty hard up is bound to get married sooner or later."

1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941
(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

683 623 69 When the anger of the relatives is not immediately spent, or when the case involves many victims, a different course of action may be adopted:

In olden times when suspected persons came before the council because they were acting peculiarly, and extreme measures were taken, like hanging them up by the wrists and putting wood under as though to light it, they would sometimes admit that they were witches. This was often done. I have seen it. If a person confessed, they burned him alive. The witch has to own up and name the ones that he harmed. Even if he promises to remove the evil influence, he is burned. When they are burned they have no more evil influence. Sometimes they were shot though—any way to get rid of them.

As this indicates, the examination and punishment of the witch are frequently matters of public interest:

When something wrong which affects the whole group occurs, the leader calls in the people involved, or the important men, or even all the people. For witchcraft, a council of this sort would be held. The case would be presented, and the influential men would decide on the punishment. A man can't accuse another of witchcraft before the council unless he is absolutely sure of it.

Execution by fire is the accepted way to annihilate the sorcerer:

They find out from the shaman if a person is a witch. Then they force him to tell if he did it. His relatives have no comeback. They string the witch up by the wrists so his feet are off the ground. The witch has to tell whom he witched. The confession is good evidence. Sometimes he has to tell what he used in his witch ceremony, and it is taken away. I have heard people, when strung up to a tree by their hands, admit that they were witches. They never let them go if they prove it on them. Then a fire is built under the witch, and he is burned. Burning destroys a witch's power for future harm, but what he has already accomplished is not undone. Witches do not burn up quickly; they keep on living a long time.

683 602 Relatives are not likely to stand solidly with their kinsman when he faces a charge of sorcery. At other times a family can defend one of its members, for it will be pitted only against some other family group of comparable size. But since sorcery, unlike murder or theft, is a public offense, the witch's kin face an aroused neighborhood, and the odds are hopeless:

. . . . Even your own son will be punished the same way. The witch will insist on his side of the argument; his opponent may die within a short time. If

1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941
(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

683 602

your closest relative is a witch, he is grabbed by a crowd and burned. If the relatives object, they go right into the fire too.[16]

372 683

Fire and its derivative, ashes, are prophylactics against witches and ghosts. Objects of sorcery extracted from the body of the patient by the shaman are always consigned to the flames, where they explode noisily, giving assurance of the destruction of the witchcraft principle.[17] The same thing happens when the sorcerer's body is burned: "When he burns, there is a 'pop,' like a shot from a gun. It is the 'witchcraft' in him popping. At every burning I have seen there has been a 'pop.'"

683 578

That false charges of witchcraft can arise from motives of personal dislike is acknowledged. Sometimes those who doubt the validity of the accusation are silenced at the time, however, by the enormity of the imputations, the strident assurance and political influence of the inciters, and the prospect of defending an unpopular cause.

Some that they burned were witches, but it was not proved that they all were. H. was a war leader. He burned up several men and several women because he suspected they were witches. It's like this: Someone might come alone to him and say, "There's a man over there who is a witch." Just because one person had told him this, he would send men over there, take that man, bring some wood, and burn him alive. Often they tied witches to a branch of a tree by the wrists with the feet off the ground, swinging.

683

Punishment is in no way mitigated when the condemned witch happens to be a woman:

At a place in the Chiricahua Mountains, when I was a boy, I saw a witch woman burned. The people had gone to a shaman and had hired him to find out who was doing all the witching, for many deaths from witchcraft had occurred. The shaman had sung all night and had finally found out who the witches were. He told the people the witches were a certain husband and wife. He advised them to get rid of these two.

The couple had a young baby in the cradle at the time. While the shaman was

[16] Another reason why relatives shrink from aiding a witch will be developed later (see pp. 254–57).

[17] Only those things that are considered evil and dangerous are destroyed by fire. When I asked an informant his opinion of cremation, he said with feeling, "It would be sure to show hatred of a dead man. He is already dead. What's the use of burning him up?"

[764]

1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941
(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

683 singing, the husband spied around to see what it was all about, and he heard that he and his wife were to be caught in the morning and punished. So he took his wife and baby and escaped over a mountain during the night.

The next morning the people went to the witches' camp, and they were gone. They began to trail them and they followed them up the mountain. They finally found the woman and baby in a cave, alone. The man had gone. They brought the woman and her baby back. Since the man had got away, they were satisfied to have the woman.

They questioned the woman and asked her to hand over her witchcraft [paraphernalia], thus giving her a chance. The woman said she was unable to do so; she admitted that she was a witch, but said that the power had split her tongue in the center and had put witchcraft there, so that whatever she mentioned happened. That was how she witched, she said; but, of course, she could give them nothing.

The people said, "Well, we've given you a chance. We would not have punished you if you had given us your witchcraft objects. But now we can't see a chance for you. You are in a bad way, and we have to punish you." Meanwhile they continued to question her. At the Chiricahua Mountains there had been a battle, and two good men had lost their lives. This should not have happened. Who was responsible for that? They asked her. She was scared and admitted that she was the one who had caused their deaths.

The people became angrier. They gathered wood and piled it under a tree. Then they hanged her on the tree by the hands so that just her feet touched the top of the woodpile. Then they set the wood afire. The fire flared up and burned the woman to death without her saying a word or crying.

While she was burning, they held her baby. The baby was very small, and nobody wanted to take it, and they didn't have milk for it. They thought it was better to kill it than have it suffer hardships when it grew up, so they threw it in the fire, although they hated to do it. The group felt good about having killed the woman, because a witch deserves punishment.

After this woman was burned, many people died anyway, because, as she burned, she may have been witching people. None of the leaders of that time or their relatives are living now, and it is odd. It must be due to witchcraft.

754 602 *Sorcery, power, and kinship.*—The evil pursuits of a witch are a constant threat to the lives of his relatives—an even greater menace to them, perhaps, than to outsiders:

[678] A man may not be carrying out the rules of his power. The power says to him, "Now there, you stop that and do as I tell you." But if the man has a strong mind, he might say, "No, I'm going to keep on this way. If you don't like it, take your ceremony back." And if he continues to disobey, perhaps his close relatives are taken. But some keep on like this on purpose. They are witches and are willing to have their relatives die.